



SNAPPER STORIES

—*DRUMMOND*

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FOREWORD

The writer spent many years in engineering work in the Rocky Mountains, on the Plains and North of the Great Lakes.

He sets down the following narrative as he observed the life and habits of these animals, both under summer and winter conditions.

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"SNAPPER STORIES"

I.



THE air was cold—very cold—SNAPPER, the muskrat, had good reason to know for had not the beavers closed their dam on the Lone Creek and left his house two feet under water, too late in the season for him to build another, so he just burrowed up among the roots of a birch tree overhanging the water and made himself as comfortable as possible, though he would miss the solid waterproof roof of his house so carefully laid with rushes between layers of mud and sand. Mrs. Snapper stormed a good deal at his being so foolish as to build in the same pond as the beavers, but made the best of it and proceeded to assist in the work of making and lining the new home with bark and moss that she could get from under the snow.

SNAPPER had, however, a good deal to be thankful for; would not the dam prevent the fish coming up into the lake, now formed, and if the fish did not come up he would not have to fear the killer mink who would be prowling round searching for them and in that search find SNAPPER's house and kill both himself and his family, perhaps. Again, since the lake raised there was no beach; the water coming right up to and partly covering the roots among which SNAPPER and his wife

were now safely ensconced. It would take a very sharp eye to detect the entrance, besides this, even though the water were deeper, was not the bed of clams that SNAPPER had figured would keep himself and his family all winter, still there and well concealed.

As an extra precaution against prowling marauders SNAPPER dug a long gallery from his house proper, that came to the surface of the ground beside a hollow stump many yards away in the bush, so that in the event of his being attacked by weasel or mink he could chase his family into this gallery, and as the gallery just fitted him and no enemy could get behind him, back up fighting until they had got to safety out of the gallery and down a tunnel under the snow into the water. Then, when he was sure they were safe he would pull down the chunk that blocked the gallery between himself and his adversary, follow them into the water and to the concealed air hole at which they would be waiting. However, it would be a very powerful opponent that would attack both SNAPPER and his wife at the one time and generally, if once defeated, he would not return.

For a week nothing happened. SNAPPER and his wife making regular trips to the clam bed for clam, bringing them up to the little platform of roots in front of their house, breaking the shells open and devouring the contents, till one morning on looking out he discovered that the level of the water in the lake had, during the night, lowered a matter of six or eight inches,

leaving the two or three inches of ice hung up on the alder trees of which there were thousands in the lake, that was originally only a swamp. Necessarily a space was left between



the bottom of the ice and the top of the water underneath. It, of course, never froze over again, so the beaver and our rat family could swim round under this vast tent of ice in a temperature little colder than the water, though it might be forty below zero outside. The covering of snow also helped to keep out the intense cold. In swimming round looking for the cause of this SNAPPER came to the beaver's dam and found a big black beaver just putting the finishing touches to a sluice he and his mates had made to lower the water, after the ice was thick enough to suit them, and just to the depth that SNAPPER had found it. Thus our rat family found that, though the beavers had destroyed their house, they were now able to swim round on the surface of the water below the ice in comfort and as near approaching summer conditions as was possible, for had they not now got a heavy coat of waterproof fur which made up for the summer warmth.

So the winter wore on, the snow getting deeper and the cold getting colder, but with the deepening of the snow the home of SNAPPER and his wife grew warmer

and more comfortable. One day when SNAPPER had returned from one of his foraging expeditions he found in his home, besides his wife four baby muskrats. They were of course very like himself and he was quite pleased, but almost immediately returned to the water to dig up lily roots which Mrs. Snapper must now have in addition to her fare of clams. These roots he found and brought in a goodly store and also, for a few days, brought up Mrs. Snapper's share of clams. The youngsters however grew very fast and soon were able to follow Mr. and Mrs. Snapper on their trips, receiving their very necessary education continuously. It was when returning from one of these expeditions, on entering his home before the rest of the family, SNAPPER smelt a smell of mink at his doorstep and was immediately seized by the side of his head by the mink, who had been waiting inside. SNAPPER at once turned to leap into the water, but as he turned Mrs. Snapper sank her long sharp teeth deep in the mink's back. This caused him to lose his hold on SNAPPER's who gripped him by the neck just behind the ear. Mrs. Snapper keeping her hold in the mink's back and SNAPPER his. The mink, except for threshing round with his body, was helpless and soon began to weaken from loss of blood. He tried to escape into the water but Mr. and Mrs. Snapper would have none of it and held tight till their enemy ceased to struggle. Only then did SNAPPER unlock his jaws and, as there was no further indication of life in the mink, motioned to Mrs. Snapper to do the same, but the long brown animal was quite dead and after disposing of the body SNAPPER set

out to look for his young family who had fled at the first sign of trouble. He found them huddled together on the far side of the little lake among the roots of some rushes and led them in single file back to their home. It took a long time to get the house purged of that deadly odor of mink, but at last it was done and our rat family settled down again to a quiet existence.

One bright morning in March SNAPPER was at the end of his gallery wearing down his four great front teeth, which were growing too long, on the hard old stump and nearly lost his life by reason of this, for in working at the wood, although he did not know it, he was disturbing the surface of the snow above him, and a great pair of eyes seeing this knew there was a dinner for him if he could only get it. He approached the stump in great leaps. It was one of these leaps close by that SNAPPER heard and in a flash was in his gallery. At the same instant a great nose was pushed in, close on SNAPPER's heels and two great jaws snapped, but SNAPPER was a safe though badly frightened little rat and a sixty pound lynx drew off discomfited. He walked over and round the house for a while but soon left, knowing he could not possibly, owing to the hard frozen ground, dig in, nor would SNAPPER or any of his family come out again that day.

In this part of the country spring is a long time coming, but when it comes it does so with a rush and the air is quite warm in a day or two. With the first warm wind SNAPPER was out on his roof balcony sunning himself and was so utterly comfortable his usual alertness was somewhat dulled when suddenly a big

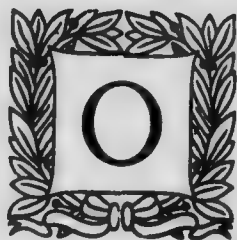
wing flipped a twig over his head, four sharp claws bit into his hip and he quickly left the ground but not before, in the instant left him, he had sprung and seized the fleshy part of the hawk's leg, high up, and thus was borne above the trees. With the other talon the bird endeavoured to tear him from his grip, but this claw, having been frozen had, for the time, lost its sharp talons and could do little more than bruise our rat friend, whose long teeth were sunk deep in the hawk's leg and body. This combat in the air continued for some minutes, till the hawk, weakened from fighting and pain together with the added weight of SNAPPER, was compelled to descend to earth and was glad when, within ten feet of the snow, to feel SNAPPER let go. He had dropped into an open space in a running stream. The hawk rose again to a branch of a fir tree to mend his wound and calm his temper. SNAPPER dove and came up under the overhanging bank. This was serious. He must be a long distance from his house and lake. The sun was going down and SNAPPER was very sore so he just climbed into the dry roots above him and lay there for hours, listening. Once in the silence of the night he seemed to hear falling water and rightly, thought it might be that flowing over the dam from his lake. When the moon rose he started toward it. It was hard work for the snow was deep but, ever climbing, tumbling, sinking and rolling over, in a couple of hours he came out on a little clearing and there, in front of him, was his old stump. So after all the hawk must have flown in a circle by reason of the fact that his load was all on one side, however here was SNAPPER

right at home. He dragged himself through his gallery and found Mrs. Snapper and the youngsters waiting for him as they did not know whence or how he had gone.

The sun was getting warmer now. The ice tent had collapsed and the surface of the lake was open water in places, covered with a film of ice at night, which melted in the day time on most days. Bare spots of ground were showing behind SNAPPER's house when one day he discovered, right on top of it and following the shore of the lake, the moccasin prints of two men and the next day he found a beaver at the bottom of the lake, just at the dam; his hind foot caught in a steel trap with chain attached and at the other end of the short chain a heavy stone. The dam was cut a little, to make some current in the lake, thus attracting the attention of the beavers. The trap was set on top of the dam with the big stone attached to the chain, so that when the beaver put his foot in it he jumped into the deep water, pulled the stone with him and so was kept below the surface and drowned. Next day this beaver had been taken away but another was found drowned, caught by both front feet, then another. The other beavers, frightened by this, left the lake so SNAPPER and his family were alone again.

Soon SNAPPER's family married and in turn had families and all lived on the lake unmolested, for the beaver or the mink never returned, and sometimes at night, when the moon shines brightly over the smiling waters of the lake, SNAPPER gathers his many grandchildren round him and tells them about the beavers and his fight in mid-air with the hawk.

II.



ONE morning early in September SNAPPER the muskrat was awakened by a steady "chuck-chuck" coming from some distance up the small stream that flowed into his lake. He dropped into the water and swam up stream to investigate. The blows of the axe, for such was the noise he had heard, became more and more distinct, and as he swam and crept nearer there was a great shout from some men—a sound he had not known before—and, with a great cracking and crashing, down came a tall pine tree to the ground with a heavy thud, its top across the stream and a scarce hundred feet from where SNAPPER was hid. Just his nose showing from under the overhanging moss on the bank.

SNAPPER was very frightened, so frightened and panic-stricken that he could scarcely move. When he had collected his wits he swam quickly away down the stream and crept into his house to think the matter over.

If these men were going to cut all the big trees round the lake they would likely see and destroy the rat peoples' houses, which they must soon start to build, and SNAPPER had to seriously consider moving his rat family to other parts.

The next day there was no chopping and the men seemed to have gone completely away, but two days

after this the quiet of the early morning was broken by the shouts of men approaching, the clanking of chains, the crashing of the underbrush and the noise of chopping, all in the vicinity of the dam. SNAPPER could see through the trees that these men, of whom there were about ten, had two big brown animals with them. He or his friends had never seen anything like this before and the frightened rats swam to the upper end of their little lake and listened, and such a noise; sawing, chopping, thumping and shouting. The crashing down of numerous trees and all the activity incidental to the building of a lumberman's dam.

All doubt in the rat's mind as to the reason for this activity was dispelled when, in the course of a couple of days, the water in their lake commenced to rise and continued to do so until it was many feet deep over SNAPPER's last winter's home among the roots of the old yellow birch, just above the level of the water at that time, as the beavers had left it. All the other rat houses in the low bank were also covered with water, which now extended right up to the rock ridges that flanked the lake. In addition to the dam the men had commenced to build some log houses on the ridge above SNAPPER's old home. More and more men came and more horses. Big trees were being felled in all directions so that any doubt SNAPPER had about remaining on the lake or leaving being settled, our rat friends prepared for the journey and one misty night they slipped quietly, one by one, over the dam and, led by SNAPPER, swam silently down the stream.

At first it was as much climbing over or diving

under the debris left by reason of the dam building, as swimming, but this debris was soon left behind and our friends moved on to the deeper and quieter stretches of water.

At times the stream skirted the bank where a sharp watch was kept for night prowlers, but generally it wound down between margins of rushes and reeds where there was little fear of meeting any enemy, except an occasional mink, in his hunting, and he would not dare to attack such a numerous party. However, there were two larger night prowlers that were always on the lookout for an unwary rat; the long, red martin and the wolverine or carcajou of the North, who watched from an overhanging branch or crouched in rounded form among the boulders where a stream ran fast, within striking distance of the narrow channel.

Our voyageurs now moved through the quiet and ever-deepening stream, ever and anon passing the mouths of small streams, emptying into the one they were traversing till, in the distance, they heard faintly the sound of fast running water. In a short time it became evident that the noise of broken water was made by the stream they were in, falling through boulders, and the rest of the rats, swimming among the reeds that lined the shore, SNAPPER went forward to reconnoiter.

He found conditions as he expected, and carefully examined, from his position in the rushes, every boulder and overhanging branch along the course of the short rapid which was some twenty feet in length down to where the stream again resumed its tranquil course.

The night air was moving across the water so he could not detect the scent of any enemy that might be lurking below him and all the boulders along the stream looked like boulders except perhaps one that lay on the opposite side. It was not quite the same color as the other boulders.

For fully half an hour he watched this stone, thinking at times it appeared to move slightly. However he decided that he was mistaken and, as it was getting near dawn and SNAPPER was anxious to get his large family into hiding through the fast approaching day, he was about to turn away and lead them through the rapid when suddenly the seeming boulder sprang into action and with a flip of his strong paw sent a large frog that had been floating down the stream high up on the bank; he leapt after it and in a trice it was devoured. SNAPPER saw then that this boulder was a large and powerful wolverine, strong enough to have destroyed his whole rat family and devour them at his leisure. After eating the frog the wolverine went back to the stream and took up his former position.

Here was a serious problem for our friend; a big wolverine blocking his further progress, only a narrow margin of rushes, where his family were hiding between the open water and the banks of the stream, too narrow and sparse to hide them from their enemies of the air and on the land during the daylight hours. True there was a small dry overflow channel to the East of the present main channel of the stream and about fifty feet away from where the wolverine was crouching. This they might all creep down without being heard by him on

account of the noise made by the water; but here again was hard luck, as the night air was blowing from this dry overflow stream bed directly to the wolverine who scenting them enroute would certainly be on them in a trice. Then again daylight was only about an hour away. What was to be done must be done quickly. SNAPPER acted; he knew the rocky shelf over which the water rushed was short and at right angles to the stream. He knew also that the fallen leaves were wet from the past days' rain and would not rustle to his tread, so he swam up stream about a hundred feet, climbed the low bank on the West side and crawled, in his rolling way, in a down stream direction, parallel to the stream and about one hundred and fifty feet from it. He climbed the boulder ridge through which the stream ran and once over this he saw the glint on the water of a marsh filled with rushes directly below him. He turned quickly and retraced his trail to where he had left the water in the stream above. His convoy of relatives were glad to see him back to where they waited for him and to follow him down stream again, over his portage and into the marsh below where they would have plenty to eat and lots of cover through the ensuing day.

Daylight was just breaking as they approached the water and all were safely in except one young rat who had stopped to examine some root that appeared tempting, and while they were looking, and by signs trying to hurry him up a great form came bounding upon him. He squeaked just once before that terrible paw struck. The rest of the family swam quickly

away towards the heart of the swamp, and the wolverine, for it was he, continued on his way towards his den bearing the young rat that hung limply in his jaws.

A very much frightened rat family continued on their way straight out into the swamp from the shore and did not stop until they came to a shallow spot, covered deep with old rushes. They crawled into these and rested. The sun soon rose and SNAPPER saw that they were in a marsh bay of a river that was flowing North a few hundred feet away.

This was bad, as, where there was big water there were big fish and the thought had barely flashed into SNAPPER's mind when in an open space of water nearby there was a heavy splash and a flip of a tail five inches wide as a big 'lunge chased a few small perch out of the water, managing to engulf two or three of them in his enormous mouth.

SNAPPER and his family had nothing to eat all that day as they dared not move for fear of attracting the attention of these big fish which would lay in wait for them, day and night, till there would be no family left either by reason of having been eaten by the 'lunge or by starvation.

When it was quite dark, that night SNAPPER led his family nervously back toward the shore and swimming close by the margin of rushes started North, following the course of the river in the hope of discovering some small creek flowing into it at the mouth of which they would likely find some clams to eat, for by this time, the young rats' failing strength was impeding their progress. This was as SNAPPER thought it might be; the stream

and the clams were both located, the clams in about three feet of water. This was a bit of good luck, especially as the clam bed was a large one. While his family were bringing the clams up in their mouths, taking them to the shore and eating their fill, SNAPPER started up the little stream to hunt for a safe place to spend the coming day.

A short distance up he came to a section of the creek where the water ran in a shallow sheet over a gravelly bar from the level above. This level was at that time only about two feet higher than the river, but the bar would likely, in the spring time, be under water entirely, caused by the fresher.

SNAPPER was very anxious for his people to commence the construction of their winter houses. October was fast approaching and he did not know where or to what fresh dangers his following the river would lead him, so as day was breaking, from the top of the gravel and clay bar, he examined the expanse of the water above.

The surface of this pond seemed to be quite as large as his old lake, about as deep as it originally was and covered with the usual reeds and rushes, except for a few extra deep spots and where the stream wound its sluggish course down the centre.

Here was a place where the beaver would not raise the water by damming it back, as the length to be dammed was too great; the gravel and clay bar being at no place for two hundred yards in length higher than a foot above the level of the pond. Then there were no trees close at hand for either beavers or lumbermen to

cut. Beaver hay lined the flat shores and SNAPPER knew there would be lots of sweet roots. There was plenty of mud and sand to build houses with and he noted with satisfaction the big strong rushes for his thatching. Then, too, the family could handle any marauding mink that might attack them. However, this was not likely to happen, as all this comparatively still pond would soon be frozen over and any mink would have a long way to swim under the ice to reach our rat friends, and should he do so he would be forced to come up for air, which would have to be either in a rats' house or at one of their hidden and continuously kept open air holes, so the chances of his ever getting back alive would be very few indeed. Again, there would be, at least till spring, no big fish in the pond. All this, together with the fact that there was a clam bed available close by, decided SNAPPER to make the pond their winter quarters and he returned to his large group of relatives at the mouth of the creek to acquaint them of the fact. They were, by this time, well satisfied by their clam fare and somewhat rested.

It was now broad daylight and our rat colony must find cover quickly. In a few minutes they were all up in the pond and separated into their individual family groups, which numbered just thirteen, and there was sufficient cover and resting places for all.

That night the work of building thirteen real muskrat houses was commenced. The piles were well above water line inside, in weak; the entrance from about two feet below water line bored through and lined with sticks. Then, as the nights were now frosty the domes

were laid with rushes and mud, the center hollowed out, lined with rushes, and lo, the thirteen houses were completed.

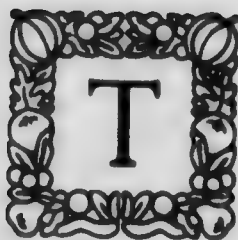
In addition to this there were air holes to be located among the bunches of rushes which, with the assistance of the snow soon to fall, could be readily kept open if for any reason the rats were temporarily driven from their homes they could swim to these holes for air and if necessary, crawl out on the ice under the snow among the rushes. Then there were two or three tunnels to be burrowed above the level of the pond but below the surface of the gravel and clay bar, between the pond and the river, to enable the rats to get clams from the big clam bed.

Both these works were carried out and our rat friends settled down to their winter existence knowing they would be reasonably safe and well provided for.

In ten days more there was six inches of ice on the lake covered with nearly a foot of snow. SNAPPER and his friends were comfortable in their warm houses below and although at times wolves, wolverines, martins and other wild marauders sniffed at and sometimes scratched at the rat houses, in their search for food, they might just as well have been scratching stone for the walls of the little houses were nearly a foot thick and, by reason of the frost, as hard as granite.



III.



THE March morning broke clear and cold. The sun rose over a wilderness of white and its slanting rays were reflected by a myriad of snow crystals that sparkled as diamonds and radiated all the colors of the rainbow.

The air was perfectly still except from out the bush. At times the sharp crack of a poplar tree, split by the intense cold, sounded like a pistol shot.

Snow was deep in the thick bush and in the open spaces it had drifted heavily. Tailing every thick clump of brush the drifts were five and six feet deep and on the small lake occupied by SNAPPER and his colony of little engineers, they covered the rushes and all but four of the rat houses were completely hidden below several feet of white.

Our muskrat friends had now innumerable tunnels leading from their air holes into the bush, where they could pick up all sorts of green stuff under the snow, and also tunnels over the gravel and clay bar through another air hole to their clam bed.

SNAPPER had various places on the shore; on top of fallen trees partly hidden, from which he could look out over the surface of the snow that covered his little lake.

On this particular morning while searching for roots among the dead leaves, he took occasion to crawl

up on one of these logs and looking out, saw, crossing the lake, the staggered trail left by what appeared to be two enormous feet. The trail was close to the four rat houses that were somewhat exposed.

He jumped off his log, scurried along the snow tunnel, plopped into the water through an air hole and swam under the ice to the nearest of the exposed rat houses. They had heard the noise of crunching snow outside their house and had at once left for their air hole. Outside of this they could tell him nothing.

After all these months of peace here was trouble again, as this man on snowshoes—for he was the maker of the trail—would, in all probability, return and if possible get the rats that undoubtedly lived in the four rat houses he had seen.

Next day the wind blew a gale and the tracks made by the snowshoes were obliterated, but SNAPPER did not relax his vigilance and was at his observation post as often as his duties would permit.

Two days after the blow SNAPPER, from his post, about the middle of the day, saw two men approaching. To his surprise one of them, after pushing away the snow with a flat stick, from among some rushes, reached down and pulled up a chain, at one end of which caught in a steel trap, a young muskrat was feebly kicking. He hit the rat on the head and put it in a sack he carried. Twice again, at different places on the lake, he pulled up chains but there was no rat dangling at the ends.

The men moved on towards the four rat houses and commenced shovelling the snow away from the

South side of each; then, with an axe, one man started chopping the frozen wall of a house. He sliced it off about three-quarters of the way through and repeated the operation at the other three houses.

When they had completed this work to their satisfaction they left and things were quiet for a day or two.

One day, unseen by SNAPPER or any of the other rats, these men stealthily approached the rat houses, carrying shot guns. They took up their positions each beside the thinned wall of a house and together, at a distance of only a few feet, fired their guns into it, making large holes in the walls.

The roar of the discharge sent SNAPPER quickly to his observation post, where he saw the men in the act of dragging forth from the holes they had made, a number of killed and stunned rats—eleven from both rat houses. The stunned rats they killed, put all in their bags and marched away. A few days later they came back and fired their guns again into the other two houses, but they were empty. The rats, on SNAPPER's orders, having moved elsewhere.

The colony was not bothered again by these trappers, but the possibility of the men returning kept them in constant fear which was accentuated by the fact that the now melting snow was settling and leaving the other nine rat houses exposed.

The water on top of the ice was getting deeper by reason of the weight of snow on it and the added moisture of the thaws, but one day, most of the snow being melted and the lake having risen a little, the ice parted from the shore. This left a space of open water round

the edge of the lake, from five to ten feet wide, which was watched intently at night by the various forest prowlers in the hope of catching a rat. In addition to this the thaw was penetrating the rat houses and they were gradually changing to just solid piles of mud and rushes.

Thus were the rats becoming daily more and more exposed.

Besides all this there were no tree roots at the edge of the lake for them to build their summer homes in and if there were the flat, soft mud shores would prevent their getting to and from them without being very much exposed to attack from an enemy lurking near, so SNAPPER saw that while the pond afforded his colony good winter protection it was quickly becoming a place of no protection at all. The presence of such a large number of rats—there were now more than one hundred—with no cover except that afforded by the brush on the clay and gravel bar would soon draw down on them numbers of their natural enemies. The river was raising inch by inch, and soon the bar would be covered; at least for a week or two.

SNAPPER and his rat colony must either get away or be exterminated, so one warm spring night after a last feed from the clam bed he and his one hundred associates, skirting the shore, started North down the river.

They had no difficulty following him in the dark, as from time to time he made that peculiar "snap-snap" noise muskrats make when alarmed or when signalling.

The rat colony moved on down stream till in the distance there came to them the sound of rapids. A few minutes later SNAPPER noted that the water in the river was moving faster. It was time that he went ahead of the rest to ascertain, if possible, what conditions at these rapids or falls were. He went on down and was soon opposite the white water. The river was high and in the center there were large, thick cakes of ice speeding by and, as far as SNAPPER could see, they did not break up. Rather than make the overland portage, past this rapid, he figured he would send his charge through it on one of these big cakes of ice. Although there was some light from a quarter moon he could not just see where the rapid ended. The water might be flowing over a high fall just below and he could not go down to see without exposing himself on the rocks lining the shore. He must observe things by daylight.

This meant that his convoy had to spend the day above the rapid. The river was high, the water coming right up to the roots of some trees along the bank. SNAPPER swam back and in a short time each rat was making a shallow hole for himself among these roots below the overhanging bank, where he would be safe for the day.

At the first indication of daylight SNAPPER swam down to the rapid again and finding a place where he could see and not be seen, he waited. While he was waiting he noted besides the continuous procession of ice cakes moving down stream, just opposite to where he was hiding, a medium sized brown bear come lumbering out of the bushes. He looked up and down the

stream and then, taking two or three steps further out, commenced lapping up the water with his red tongue. An instant after the bear commenced drinking there was a splash a short distance away and a fish hawk rose with a small fish in his talons. The bear merely looked at it for a second, the water dripping from his mouth, then commenced lapping again.

SNAPPER could now see some distance down stream but there was no quiet water. As the light grew stronger, several hundred yards below him and on each side of the river he saw two gray stone cliffs supporting a long wide beam that hung over the river. This looked like the work of men and SNAPPER was further convinced when, on the other side of the bridge, he observed a log house such as the lumbermen built at the lake the beavers had made.

SNAPPER was in a quandary; here he had been fleeing from men and now was coming right up to their habitations. While he was thus engaged in thinking the matter over, there was a big noise in the direction of the bridge and a great black thing, belching smoke from its head, rushed across it, dragging a number of houses.

When the railway train—for such it was—had gone, SNAPPER swam back to his friends, thoroughly frightened and very disheartened. However, the brave little rat was not altogether discouraged, as he knew that, for the time being, providing they kept hidden during the day, his rat friends were comparatively safe. He had them burrow deeper among the roots they were in, and digging a hole for himself, all were soon dozing

and a casual observer would not know there was a rat in the vicinity.

When evening came, SNAPPER led his rats up to a little marsh bay along his side of the river where there were plenty of roots to eat and at the edge of the river channel, in fairly deep water, they found some clams.

Thus, in safe quarters, as long as the high water lasted, SNAPPER felt he could leave his friends for a time. It was absolutely necessary that he find a suitable place for them to stay. That evening, after putting a very careful rat in charge of the party, he swam slowly up stream and crossed the river above the rapid.

He continued ascending, keeping close to the shore and watching the bank carefully for low places where a small stream might be flowing into the river.

After having gone about a mile he found one that he knew would not be dry in summer, and turned into it. He followed its course for a time and at length came to a place where it flowed over an old beaver dam. He crawled over this and found himself in a small lake. Crossing this lake he continued following the stream, but to his surprise it was flowing in the direction he was going and had a much greater volume than the stream he had as ended.

Here was a place where the beavers had diverted a stream, originally flowing to the river, into another channel to suit themselves. If they were in the vicinity it was not likely they would return to this lake, except to repair the dam by means of which they had made the diversion.

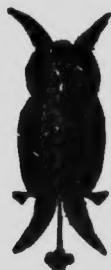
SNAPPER turned and swam back. He examined the

shores of the lake and found the tree roots in many places overhanging the water. As the dam would not likely be raised and as there were no beavers and no big trees for the lumbermen to cut, he decided this was a safe place to bring his rat colony. True, while there would be lots of roots to eat there were no clams; however, these could be had, at some risk, by journeying to the river.

SNAPPER then climbed over the dam, swam the stream, crossed the river and, just as day was breaking, rejoined his comrades.

Next day they all swam across the river and following SNAPPER, soon arrived safely at the lake he had found. Here they commenced making their summer homes in the overhanging roots and daylight found them safe in holes above the water line, the entrances being well below it.

Day by day they enlarged their nests and, lining them with bark and moss, were soon very comfortable and ready to enjoy a summer in peace.



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